

Message Text

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ACTION SCS-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3627

INFO AMCONSUL MONTERREY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASD, MX

SUBJECT: REACTION TO PIEDRAS NEGRAS JAILBREAK

REF: MONTERREY 0262

1. COVERAGE OF THE ESCAPE OF USC PRISONERS FROM THE PIEDRAS NEGRAS JAIL HAS NOT BEEN AS COMPLETE IN THE MEXICO CITY PRESS AS IN THE US (OR POSSIBLY, BORDER AREA) PRESS. DESCRIPTION OF THE DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS IN THE JAIL, FOR EXAMPLE, AS PROVIDED BY ONE OF THE ESCAPEES WAS PUBLISHED IN THE SMALL ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY HERE BUT NOT IN THE SPANISH-LANGUAGE PRESS. THE JAILBREAK HAS BEEN PORTRAYED HERE AS SOMETHING OF A GANGSTER-LIKE "COMMANDO" RAID ACROSS THE BORDER, AND REPORTED STATEMENTS OF LOCAL OFFICIALS IN EAGLE PASS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE ESCAPED PRISONERS WILL NOT BE RETURNED HAVE CLEARLY AROUSED SOME NATIONALISTIC IRE.

2. EMBASSY HAS HAD NO INDICATION FROM GOM OFFICIALS THAT THEY ARE CONSIDERING REQUESTING EXTRADITION OF THE ESCAPEES, THOUGH ATTORNEY GENERAL OJEDA PAULLADA, DURING RECENT VISIT

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OF DEA ADMINISTRATOR BENZINGER, PRIVATELY VOICED SOMEWHAT

WISTFUL HOPE THAT PRISONERS MIGHT BE RETURNED AND URGED
THAT THEY NOT BE MADE "HEROES" IN THE U.S.

3. GOM-CONTROLLED DAILY EL NACIONAL TODAY DISCUSSED
JAILBREAK IN EDITORIAL AND IN SEPARATE COLUMN. EDITORIAL
SUGGESTED THAT MEXICO SHOULD REQUEST CLARIFICATION OF INCI-
DENT BY USG. COLUMNIST MARIO EZCURDIA WENT FURTHER,
ASKING GOM OFFICIALS TO EXAMINE US-MEXICAN AGREEMENTS TO
ASCERTAIN IF MEXICAN AUTHORITIES HAVE THE RIGHT TO ENTER
US TO CAPTURE US CRIMINALS FREED BY FORCE FROM MEXICAN
JAIL, AND HE CALLS FOR ENERGETIC DIPLOMATIC PROTESTS.
EZCURDIA RELATES INCIDENT TO PERSHING CAMPAIGN FOLLOWING
PANCHO VILLA'S RAID ON COLUMBUS, NEW MEXICO.

4. IN LIGHT OF KNOWN FACTS ABOUT PRIMITIVE AND INHUMANE
CONDITIONS AT PIEDRAS NEGRAS JAIL AND OF FACT THAT US
OFFICIALS HAD PREVIOUSLY COMPLAINED OF THOSE CONDITIONS TO
GOM OFFICIALS, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT GOM WOULD WANT INCIDENT
UNDULY PUBLICIZED. HOWEVER, FERVENT NATIONALISTS IN MEXICAN
MEDIA MAY FORCE GOM INTO FACE-SAVING GESTURE OF SOME SORT,
INCLUDING PERHAPS AN INQUIRY FROM THE FOREIGN SECRETARIAT.
THOMPSON

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